

# Fostering entrepreneurship in developing nations: Tapping into the “hidden potential” of the Namibian Rural Youth

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## ABSTRACT

Fostering a culture of Entrepreneurship in Namibia should be considered in the context of a historical framework. Namibia became an independent state only in 1990, after a long period of colonial oppression under the German colonial rule and then South Africa. Independence enabled the nation to create its own political and economic policies which potentially will help the nation to prosper in the near future. These policies are in alignment with the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) which addresses the growing concern of the role that youth could play in the development of nations (World Bank Report, 2007). Furthermore there is also a growing awareness amongst donor agencies and civil society organisations, which address the potential that youth entrepreneurship, can bring to developing nations. However, opportunities for formal education and training are scarce, and this impedes young entrepreneurs in acquiring the skills and confidence they need.

This paper will investigate the literature as it pertains to the role of Entrepreneurship in the development process and the benefits that Namibia as a country could derive by fostering a culture of entrepreneurship amongst its rural youth. In particular, this paper intends to review and analyse the Namibian cultures and the contribution that culture could make to sustained entrepreneurial motivation. I argue that having a diverse culture could be a distinctive advantage for young people in Namibia as it makes room for creativity and innovation, which are one of the key

traits entrepreneurs must possess. The paper will adopt a theoretical and historical approach, guided by discourse analysis of telephone interviews, governmental reports, news documents and policies. Initiatives currently taken by the Namibian government to foster a culture of entrepreneurship will also be explored.

The expected outcomes of this research are:

Critical discourse could lead to a better exploration regarding youth entrepreneurship in Namibia. (This outcome directs the discussion)

An enhanced understanding of the role of entrepreneurship and culture both at a local and international context.

Rural youth policies which are designed internationally, will lead to a better understanding of the Namibian rural youth policies.

Key terms: Indigenous Entrepreneurship, Namibia, Culture, Rural Youth and Entrepreneurial Motivation

NB: This paper is part of the authors PHD thesis.

## **1. Introduction**

This paper seeks to explore the ‘hidden entrepreneurial potential’ of the Namibian rural youth. ‘Hidden entrepreneurial potential’ refers to the inherent characteristics or traits rural young people possess, however due to their living conditions which amongst many others include poverty, unemployment and an economic base which is almost non-existent they struggle to live up to their maximum potential. The conditions could have been as a result of the colonial history of developing nations. This paper will make specific reference to the colonial history of the Republic of Namibia. Until date, the academic literature has produced few studies or insights into the ‘deeply embedded ‘entrepreneurial potential of rural youth communities in Namibia.

Over the last few decades Namibia has managed to reach a population of 2million, and the country has also maintained an annual population growth rate of 2.6 percent (%) of which the majority is below 24 years of age. This gives a clear indication that the Namibian population is dominated by young people leading to a very high dependency ratio (National Youth Policy of Namibia, 2001: 2). Most of these people live in rural communities. This rural group of young Namibian people could be referred to as the indigenous people of the country. Namibian indigenous people are so called because except for the fact that their ancestors were the first settlers in the country, most of these people are socially, economically and culturally disadvantage (Peredo et.al., 2004:).

In comparison to any other citizens living in the urban parts of the country the living conditions of these rural communities are unbearable. E.g. they possess a minimum level of health and sanitation.

As with many other developing nations, indigenous populations experience severe discrimination and prejudice from their employers, fellow citizens and in some instances their own family members. In terms of economic development indigenous or rural youth in Namibia falls amongst those Namibians which survive on a minimal or worse standard of living and in poverty. This is not surprising as Namibia has been rated as one of the most unequal countries in terms of resource distribution in the world (United States Aid Namibia, 2006: 1). This latter mentioned factor of inequality coupled with poor and inefficient government policies, high unemployment rate and the low levels of education results in poverty (Fisk, 1985). A proposed solution to drive these rural communities out of poverty could be economic independence through entrepreneurial ventures in small business and this could be a solution to decrease their dependency on welfare or external support (Fuller, Dansie, Jones & Holmes, 1999, Herron, 1998). This would enable in improving their living circumstances, not only those of particular individuals within the rural community but that of a broader community. The enhancement of living circumstances is not the only factor that has to be taking into cognisance in rural communities, but also culture which forms the fundamental basis for their daily lifestyle. Currently there appears to be no rigorous research on Namibian rural youth coupling their entrepreneurial potential with their culture.

This paper aims to fill this gap in the literature by presenting the results obtained from telephone interviews and in-depth interviews which will provide an insight into the Namibian rural youth, looking in particular the 'hidden' entrepreneurial characteristics which could drive these young people to success and also enable them to spot entrepreneurial opportunities. This paper is structured first by giving a historical overview on Namibia. Thereafter the role of entrepreneurship and culture in development is outlined with guidance of international literature. Thirdly the paper defines 'rural youth' in an international then Namibian context and the roles these people could play in terms of development. The last sections of the paper discuss the methods that were employed to get some insights about rural young people in Namibia, followed by a brief analysis of the results and a summary of the findings.

## 2. Historical Background of the Republic of Namibia

The history of the Republic of Namibia will be discussed in four phases following a chronological order of the colonial regimes the country went through until it is today known as the Republic of Namibia. These four primary phases are:

- a) *The Pre-colonial Period*
- b) *German South West Africa: AD 1884-1915*
- c) *South Africa and South West Africa: AD 1915-1988*
- d) *Independence: from AD-1990*

a) ***The Pre-colonial period:*** Before the European settlers ever set foot on Namibian soil; the territory was buzzing with activity. Given the low literacy skills and writing skills the indigenous nations possess at that moment in time little is known till date about the history and the economic activities which took place in this period. Europeans were the first ones ever to sit down and document the happenings during those times. However as most indigenous ancestors of the pre-colonial are still very much in tact with their cognitive dimension and this enables them to reflect and show the happenings through their rich ***“oral traditions”*** which usually circulate amongst local and rural communities.

When the first Europeans settled in Namibia in the early 1800's, they came into contact with indigenous communities with complex social and cultural traditions. Approximately around the same time a group of “Oorlams” (***meaning we have nothing***) – descendants of the Malay slaves, Khoi- San, Dutch and English at Cape Town moved across the Orange River with horses and guns. This gave them a tremendous advantage and soon they owned large number of livestock (cattle and goats). Many oral traditional stories exist from this time as some people say most of these livestock was stolen from the Nama and Herero people, who were rich in livestock and others argue that it was obtained through tribute (F. Apollus, telephone communication, 10 May, 2008). Many stories from this period seem much like the ***“Wild West”*** with cattle raiding, ambushes, dancing langarm, alcohol and substance abuse (which were a primary source of income for most indigenous communities in Namibia till date).

However, *‘Oorlam Nama’* people as they are referred to as today were not only in for fun, they were working tirelessly to make a living and survival for their extended families. In addition they established strong trade links with the “Cape” (Cape Town today). They built a gravel road to Walvisbay from Windhoek which is a road which exists till date, and most important they established headquarters in Windhoek (the capital of Namibia). Initially they called Windhoek –**“Winterhoek”** (referring to a corner of winter as in the season) and was later corrupted and called Windhoek. It is prominent that Windhoek was founded by the Germans – however the oral traditions have a different notion regarding this statement.

**b) German South West Africa: AD 1884-1915:** The German seizure of Angra Pequena in 1884 is one of the first incidents in the European **“Scramble for Africa”**. This results in a colony known as German South West Africa (Deutsch Sud West Afrika). The next 10 decades were a period of very extreme and harsh conditions for most of the tribes which were living in Namibia, in particular the inland from the arid coastal strip of the “Namib desert”. These indigenous people who were located in this area suffered the most severe experiences of modern colonial history. This happened at the first hands of Germans and subsequently South Africa.

During the early years of the Germans presence in Namibia, the relationship was relatively calm and peaceful. The initial region within where the Germans were based consisted of only about 2000 traders and farmers in the region around 1896, and their relations with the dominant local tribe referred to as the “Herero” than, was very peaceful. A natural disaster a cattle plague called **“Rinderpest”** created conditions which were not in favour of the Herero people. This plague could be traced back to 1889 as it initially occurred in Somaliland and until 1889 it was not carried across the Zambezi River in the Northern Namibia. This was one of the major turning points in the lives of the Herero people. They were devastated and so were their flocks, as there are exclusively cattle raising people. In desperation they have to sell all their cattle to the German people for very little money, much of their land and half of their cattle which was their main source of income. The catastrophe seems to have benefited a substantive number of Europeans, at the expense of the Herero communities. This incident prompted the Herero people to attempt in 1904 and started an uprising against the German intruders. The summer of January 1904 shows a very aggressive move which has been made by the Herero people, they killed every German who they regard as been capable of carrying arm. The only people they excluded were women and children, German missionaries and Europeans which had other nationalities. The total number

of German deaths was not more than 100, but the incident was devastating and terrifying. This incident led to German Emperor at that time William II instruct General **“Luthar Von Trotha”** which was known for his severity to go on a mission to Africa to put the uprising buy **“fair means or foul”**. He indeed choose the foulest imaginable.

(<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/wa.html>:

Assessed: 08 May 2008).

In August 1904, Von Trotha was ready for action with his reinforcements. Most of the indigenous Herero people were based on the Waterberg Plateau, not very far from the Kalahari Desert, living in an area which had only one exit from the circle which was only the direction to the desert. When the Herero tribesman flew in the direction of the desert, Von Trotha placed German guard post to prevent them from return. With no water, and temperatures which are as high as that of an oven 8000 men perish in the desert including women, children and their cattle. As it that was not enough Von Trotha ordered a (***Vernichtungsbefehl***) extermination order. This statement read as follows:

***“Any Herero found living within the borders of the German territory will be shot”.***

This proclamation makes chilling reading, as an unusually blunt statement of the concept of **‘ethnic cleansing’**. The world was shocked by this statement and Von Trotha was called back to Germany. It was regarded as the century’s first shameful characteristic of genocide.

Afterwards the Herero people came at the rescue of the other main tribe which were the Nama indigenous people. This combined indigenous groups added to a total of 15 000 people, however most of them were sent to work in railway camps to work as labourers of the railway lines. For many of them this proved to be like a death sentence.



**c) *South Africa and South West Africa: AD 1915-1988:*** With the outbreak of World War 1 a newly independent domination of South Africa rallies the British cause. The only country the Germans were able to target in the region was South West Africa. Due to the Sarajevo assassination in the First War break out, this means that Germany was at war with the British Empire in Europe. In February 1915, the South African President Louis Botha, leads an invasion in person. After a fast defeat to the Union troops of South Africa, Germany had to surrender it administration of South West Africa to South Africa.

At the end of World War I League of Nations placed South West Africa under British Mandate, while the administration of the country was entrusted to South Africa. This led to the integration of the country into most of the activities which took place in South Africa, until it was later referred to as the fifth province of the Union. There was prosperity in the region after World War II; however there were continuous clashes between South Africa and the United Nations from the 1940's. In 1948 apartheid laws were introduced by South Africa to Namibia, another period of harsh and severe conditions for Namibia. Uprisings started, this time from another indigenous group in Namibia known as the Owambo (with their establishment of the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) people. Through continuous efforts and battles the South African administration and troops collapse and in 1988. South West Africa was finally handed over to its people, and two years later the country gained its independence with a new elected and democratic government.

(<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/wa.html>:

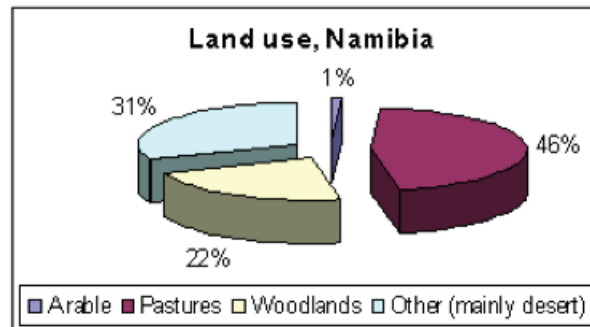
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**d) *Independence, Geography, Culture and Economic conditions: from AD-1990:*** During the elections which were held in 1989 SWAPO won 57% of the votes and the country became finally independent on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1990, under the leadership of Sam Nujoma. This newly elected government pursued a policy of peace and reconciliation with most of the white government officials still remaining in their jobs and also reconciliation with the South African government.

Namibia is located in the South Western part of Africa and it borders with South Africa in the south and Angola in the north and Botswana in the east. The country has an estimated land area of 824,269 sq km.

This area is slightly more than half of the size of Alaska. The country is partly dessert with hot temperatures and rainfall is relatively scarce. The main dominant features of the country are mainly dry in the South and moderately green with a better rainfall in the Northern part.

**Figure 1: Land Use in Namibia**  
Source: Ministry of Trade and Industry



The major city and the capital is Windhoek which has a population 230,000 people (Annul Report: Ministry of Trade and Industry 2007). Ethnically and culturally the 2 (two) million people of Namibia consist of 11 indigneous cultural groups namely the Afrikaners, English, German, Nama, Herero, Damara, Oshiwambo, San, Tswana, Caprivian, Bushman and Baster or Coloured. Each of these ethnic groups has got their own features values and belief systems. Given these diverse cultural groups English is the official language in Namibia.

The Namibian economy is highly dependent on extraction of minerals for export. Rich alluvial diamonds deposits make Namibia a primary source of gem quality diamonds. Namibia is the fourth-largest exporter of non-fuel minerals in Africa, the world's fifth-largest producer of uranium, and the producer of large quantities of lead, zinc, tin, silver, and tungsten. The mining sector employs only about 3% of the population while about half of the population depends on subsistence agriculture for its livelihood. Namibia normally imports about 50% of its cereal requirements; in drought years food shortages are a major problem in rural areas. Other sectors include fishing and agriculture. A high per capita GDP, relative to the region, hides one of the world's most unequal income distributions

(<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/wa.html>:

Assessed: 08 May 2008).



### 3. Two legs of Development: Entrepreneurship and Culture

#### 3.1 Entrepreneurship

One way to address development in indigenous rural communities is by viewing it through the lens of entrepreneurship and culture. Given the historical and economic background of Namibia, it is evident that when fostering an entrepreneurship in these communities it must always be coupled with culture. This is because we can only tap into their “hidden potential” of rural youth if we care about issues which are of great relevance to them. Careful attention has been given to both two legs of development in this paper.

The first leg of development which is widely addressed in the academic literature is entrepreneurship. From a historical perspective entrepreneurship is one of the oldest activities. These activities were enabling individuals to discover or identify new possibilities for business and exploit these possibilities for an economic gain as this is a very important aspect of any human alive (Landstrom, 2007: 3). Numerous scholars such as Cantillon (1755); Say (1803); Schumpeter (1912); Steyaert and Hjorth (2006) and Dana (2007) addresses entrepreneurship across their specific disciplines, but before the discussion is narrowed to these specific areas of specialisation it would be important to distinguish between three important concepts which could create confusion to readers. These are *entrepreneur*, *enterprise* and *entrepreneurship*.

- **Entrepreneur:** The word is derived from the French word ‘*entreprendre*’ which means ‘to undertake’ it signifies a person who undertakes or operates a new venture or enterprise, while taking the risks and the responsibility for the risks involved in setting up a new operation (Pandey, 2006: 1). (This definition if one reads it with utmost care includes enterprise and entrepreneurship).
- **Enterprise:** The execution of various combinations and new skills are referred to as the ‘*enterprise*’ (Schumpeter, 1934: 74).
- **Entrepreneurship:** refers to the entire process which includes giving guidance, direction, supervision, risk taking and control, as could be seen in the definition of the ‘*entrepreneur*’ (Mill, 1848).

This second outcome of this paper directed by the first outcome is to explore the role of Entrepreneurship and Culture at an international and local context. To achieve this expected outcome, we need a clear understanding of three distinguished viewpoints of entrepreneurship. These viewpoints are in an economic, social and indigenous form. This distinction will be made by means of clear definitions and explanations from scholars.

- ***An economic perspective***

An aristocrat industrialist Jean Baptiste Say views entrepreneurship as a process whereby an individual ‘unites all means of production thereafter find the value for those products. Furthermore, an individual continues to recover the entire capital employed and the value of interest, wages and the rent he pays as well as the profit belonging to himself (1816. 28: - 9).

A definition from the Harvard Business Schools defines entrepreneurship as the “pursuit of an opportunity beyond the resources one can currently control’s” (Smilor, 1997: 343)

- ***Social Entrepreneurship***

This definition transcends the definition from the economic perspective a step further, and has been described as the neo-liberal paradigm, and is currently disseminated worldwide. Social Entrepreneurship makes a particular emphasis on the role played by self regulating markets in providing not only increasing the wealth of particular individuals, but also improvements of the society (Steyaert and Hjorth, 2006: 61). Similar to economic entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs are also risk takers, however they are distinctive in the sense that they can give their life to a cause, and result in great change, which could go beyond a single rural village or community to entire nations across the world (Pandey, 2006: 7). Mahatma Ghandi and Nelson Mandela are great examples.

From the definitions of economic and social entrepreneurship it is clear that entrepreneurship enable empowerment, creation, nurturing and encouragement of individuals at a larger scale. However, these latter mentioned attributes or qualities bring with them tremendous challenges in developing economics, in particular people based in rural areas. This group of people will require a very distinctive and unique from of entrepreneurship, named ***‘indigenous entrepreneurship’***

- ***Indigenous Entrepreneurship***

The approach to entrepreneurship in indigenous people will be slightly different to the definitions indicated from the two perspectives above. This difference is usually created by the culture of indigenous people. Their cultural customs and practices are usually not compatible with some of the definitions above. The primary reason being, what could be regarded as a resource in some parts of the world might not be viewed as a resource in other communities. This is very significant as entrepreneurship cannot on be viewed on the basis of opportunity alone, but rather how a different culture perceives this opportunity (Dana, 1995: 67).

This leads the discussion into the fundamental question. What is indigenous entrepreneurship? This form of entrepreneurship exist into indigenous nations which are individuals whose ancestors were living in a specific area prior to colonisation, or within a particular nation state, prior to the formation of a new nation state.

In broader terminology Dana (1995) defines indigenous entrepreneurship employment based on 'indigenous knowledge'. Indigenous entrepreneurship appears to be the bridge between economic and social entrepreneurship.

This definition encompasses both economic and social entrepreneurship as it talks about the individual (economic view), society (social view) and culture (indigenous view). This paper will continue the discussion by making specific reference to indigenous entrepreneurship, as it creates a good basis for argument in the Namibian rural youth.

Entrepreneurship in Namibian rural youth will always be coupled with their cultural practices. The following section will give a brief discussion about culture.

## **3.2 Culture**

From the historical discussion and the discussions on Entrepreneurship, it becomes clearer to the researcher that fostering entrepreneurship in the Namibian rural youth could be of no value, if one does not pay respect and tribute to the history and culture of the community at large. As we continue with the first and second objectives of this paper we now look into the ways culture is viewed and perceived.

According to Tylor (1924) culture is that complex whole which includes, knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, customs and other habits which man develops by being members of a particular society. Different scholars have unpacked the definition widely and in particular Hofstede (1980), Lundberg (1985) and Schein (1985) makes specific reference to various artefacts, values and basic assumptions made by a particular society. Culture in the rural community sense could be seen as the attributes, values, and systems communities have developed over decades. As could be seen from the history of Namibia, across the four phases of colonial oppression there are certain customs of thinking and behaviour that these communities in Namibia have developed. They could today refer to these traits and behaviour as part of their culture. Beyond the international definitions from scholars, viewing it from a local or traditional context Namibia communities display their culture through both tangible and non-tangible. Some communities seem to be very explicit about it, in particular the Nama community. Their customs of dancing and singing which existed long before colonisation is still prominent as ever today. They refer to this as culture. Conducting meaningful research in these communities requires understanding and appreciating these values and customs.

In particular Hofstede (1980) cultural dimensions were used to measure culture across countries. Hofstede did not however specify the relationship between entrepreneurship and culture but he measured culture across five dimensions namely; individualism/collectivism, power distance, masculinity/femininity, long term versus short term orientation and uncertainty avoidance. Individualism versus Collectivism could be seen as a prominent dimension which was reflected in the definitions of entrepreneurship above. In rural communities and especially in developing economies, the collective seems to be preferable, rather than the individual. The collective takes into consideration all views or forms of entrepreneurship, however all forms appear to be as equally important as the cooperation of the individual is reflected in the collective. To ensure that the spirit of entrepreneurship is kept alive for longer years to come, a certain group of citizens could make this happen. This group is regarded as the “youth”. This paper wants to look at a specific group ‘rural youth’ within the Namibian society. This leads us into the third objective of this paper (guided by the first objective); in exploring the role youth policies designed internationally could lead to an understanding of “rural youth” policies in a local context.

#### **4. The “Namibian Rural Youth?”**

Approximately 1.3 billion young people across the world are expected to be the next

economic and social actors. Not only will they be actors but spokesmen/ and women for the generation across the world. Targeting youth is essential as this will ensure that they are groomed as productive workers, entrepreneurs, parents, citizens and above all community leaders. To ensure that these latter mentioned are achieved poverty reduction and growth will be essential (World Development Report, 2007). The Millennium Summit in 2000 attended by various dignitaries across the world ***“made a commitment to give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work”***. Alongside the International Labour Organisations (ILO) has been working on various aspects and policies which could respond to the challenges of youth development. A major milestone regarding youth development came into effect at the International Labour Conference in June 2005 (Chigunta, Schnurr, James-Wilson and Torres, 2005: 1). In Africa the issues of youth unemployment and underemployment remains one of the major challenges for the governments. This section of the paper is devoted in given a definition of ‘youth’ in a Namibian context thereafter narrow the focus by looking specific reference to the policies and the challenges they encounter.

This paper specifically addresses youth in Namibia, because there are still continuous debates and confusion as to who can be regarded as youth. In most African countries, youth start from the age of 15, however the maximum youth age differs across countries (Please see table 1 below).

**Table 1. Youth Age Groups in Africa: (Source: Mkandawire, 1996)**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Youth age</b>	<b>Maturity age</b>	<b>Voting age</b>
<b>Botswana</b>	<b>12-29</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Ghana</b>	<b>15-35</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Malawi</b>	<b>14-25</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Tanzania</b>	<b>15-35</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>South Africa</b>	<b>15-35</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Nigeria</b>	<b>12-30</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Kenya</b>	<b>15-35</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>

The Namibian definition of youth is the same as that of South Africa, as can be from the historical discussion of Namibia, the country has got most of their laws and policies similar to that of their neighbours. The definition of youth in Namibia includes all young men and women ranging from the ages of 15-35 years.

This study particular focuses on the rural youth, because they are located in areas where opportunities to entrepreneurship are scarce or non-existent. Furthermore it does not imply that “urban youth” do not face similar challenges. A substantial number of these young people are raised in families where finding opportunities or means of survival outside of the community is not a high priority. “Rural Youth” mean citizens of the country ranging from the age of 15-35 who are living in remotes areas where chances of personal development and community development are scarce. In order to



ensure that youth have an equal opportunity to participate in activities of the country, Government of the Republic of Namibia has developed a policy which is in alignment with the Millennium Development Goals. The Namibian government has the following goals and objectives (Namibian Youth Development Policy, 2001 :)

- To empower youth
- To prosper proper upbringing of young women and men to become citizens which are responsible
- To enable young women and men to initiate actions which could promote their own development and that of their communities and a broader society
- Recognising and development of self esteem, providing services to youth which are differently able and to improve access to Education and training opportunities in all fields for Namibian youth at all level were identified amongst some objectives that the policy wish to achieve.

Having identified these clear laid out goals and objectives both at an international and national level the pain of suffering, lost of hope and despair is far from over in the country. The challenges that rural communities and in particular youth face in rural areas are tremendous. These challenges are (Chigunta, Schnurr, James-Wilson and Torres, 2005: 60).

- Lack of Training and Skills
- Lack of access to favourable or lucrative markets
- Lack of ongoing business and financial support
- Poverty and economic instability in Eastern Southern Africa
- Young people are regarded to take adult roles from an earlier age

By exploring the roles of Entrepreneurship, Culture and youth both in an international and local/indigenous context, it was appropriate that the paper employs research methods to gain a much broad understanding of what this literature means to the **“Namibian Rural Youth”**. Studying Namibian Rural Youth will require a thorough examination of various research methods, in particular questionnaires, telephone or in-depth inter-

views, focus groups, biographies, discourse analysis and observation. However, due to time and financial limitations beyond the researchers control only two methods will be used for this paper. These methods are telephone interviews, in- depth interviews and critical discourse analysis.

## **5. Methodology**

Although a triangulation of the methods listed above, is foreseen in the future field-work of this study, this paper only makes it possible for the researcher to make use of telephone interviews, and critical discourse analysis. Telephone interviews are interviews which are held over the phone. The communication takes place between the interviewee and interviewer. Although it has the disadvantage of not been able to see the person you are interviewing, the benefits are numerous. One benefit that really stood out in this was the ability to test whether a researcher can cope with the unexpected. Other benefits include the verbal communication as well as the telephone skills of the interviewer are improved. Furthermore telephone interviews were used as it was not possible for the research to travel back to Namibia.

Discourse analysis is predominantly used as a linguistic approach, however is now successfully applied across all fields. Discourse analysis involves the interpretation of text, language an unspoken words and experiences of other. Recently scholars have realised that the use of language in entrepreneurship research has the potential to go beyond interviews. In broader terms discourses refers to the practices of writing and speaking (Woodilla, 1998). Discourses can be of great value in researching issues pertaining to rural youth in Namibia, as it could hep in understanding the historical and contemporary process of social and cultural change in entrepreneurship (Fairclough, 1995: 2). Given that this paper explores a historical and theoretical approach, discourses analysis was an appropriate method of choice.

To ensure that the indigenous epistemologies are adhered to, an introduction was used at the beginning of the telephone interview and verbal and a written ethical consent was sought from the participants. Interviews were semi-structured and permission was sought from the participants to record the interviews on tape. Secondary data from the

literature was also used at during the interview and recording process.

The study was confined geographically to the “Southern and Central” rural community of the Republic of Namibia. The selection criteria of the participants for this study were:

1. The Participants must be rural based in Namibia and have an extensively knowledge of the Nama/Damara culture, if they themselves are not Nama/Damara
2. Furthermore the participants met all the requirements sustaining to indigenous people in the literature.

The initial study will review a sample of 575 *‘Indigenous Namibian Rural Youth’*. This sample for the paper was reduced to only to 30 participants. This was the selected sample size because the researcher is not physically present within the community at the moment, and this paper is specifically prepared for this conference.

The 30 participants were oriented towards the topic of entrepreneurship and culture by means of a phone call. As the paper is pertaining to ‘Namibian Rural Youth six (6) key interviews were selected. Four of the participants were “rural youth” living in Namibia, namely; *two (2) youth in school, (2) youth out of school, one (1) parent and one (1) community activist in indigenous communities*. A parent and a community activist were chosen to get a clear viewpoint form a community sense.

The process to use to collect data for this paper followed the following steps:

- personal introduction by intermediary (e.g.: parents were informed in case of rural youth, although they are over the age of 18) prior to the interview.
- an informal phone call to explain the details of the telephonic interview
- respondents have been assured that they information will be treated with strictest confidence
- a written and telephonic invitation from researcher
- they had to sign the consent form and fax at back to Lincoln University
- thereafter the initial interviews were conducted
- the verbal text from the recorder was transcribes into notes onto a hard copy format, thereafter it was coded subsequently and analysed. The viewpoints of the participants were also compared.

## 6. Outcomes

The definition of indigenous implies that these people's ancestors or relatives across generation lived in Namibia prior to colonisation or a person of descent. From this indigenous entrepreneurship is defined as the traditional patterns of behaviour, by utilising their resources in the pursuit of self determination and economic sustainability via their entry into self employment, forcing social change in pursuit of an opportunity beyond the cultural norms of initial economic resources (2000: 1).

This definition entails the three core components indigenous rural communities in Namibia are keen to attain, if one look at it from the viewpoint of the history, definitions and the policies the government of the country has currently in place. However, how attainable are these goals and objectives? What practical measures and methods are in place to guide the rural youth through this journey? This paper pays special tribute to these rural youth, by exploring into their *“hidden potential”*. This paper has three primary outcomes which it aims to achieve, when tapping into the *“hidden potential”* of the Namibian rural youth. These outcomes are:

- Critical discourse will lead to a better understanding of rural youth entrepreneurship in Namibia.
- Exploring the understanding of entrepreneurship and culture in an international and local context.
- Rural youth policies designed internationally will lead to a better understudying of rural youth in Namibia.

For the attainment of these outcomes the researchers posed four primary semi-structured questions to the participants by means of a telephone interview:

1. What does entrepreneurship/ business means for the indigenous rural Nama/Damara community?
2. What does culture mean for the indigenous rural youth Nama community in Namibia? (this question was slightly adjusted as what does culture mean to you (L = school learner, Y = out of school youth, P= parent and C= community activist) as a Nama/Damara person – their names were used throughout telephone interview).

3. What specific wishes do you have for the Nama/Damara community, in particular the rural people?
4. What role do you play in your family and community and what are your personal dreams and aspirations?

## **6.1 Interview Responses from some of the respondents**

### **6.1.1 The meaning of Entrepreneurship/business**

The general definition of entrepreneurship refers to an undertaking; based on the classical definition which could be traced to the German “*unternehmung*”, literally translating as an undertaking. Entrepreneurs are the agents of entrepreneurship, from the French *entrepreneurs*, literally meaning, “between takers” (Dana, 2007: 1). Further definitions as could be seen in the beginning of this paper indicated that entrepreneurship involves a situation whereby the individual is willing to take risk in pursuit of certain venture. When we look at the definition from an economic perspective, it partly holds for the Namibian indigenous rural youth, however not completely as the communities indicated that they are looking for a means of survival. Business or entrepreneurship to these indigenous rural communities means survival.

Participants were very eager during the interview; the topic under discussion was of great value and meaning to them. This openness is a clear indication of their determination to and willingness to survive, given the necessary guidance and advice. Most Namibian communities in general believe in sharing the resources they have, however there are clearly some features of capitalistic behaviour. Capitalistic behaviour appears to create jealousy and bitterness amongst the rural indigenous communities in Namibia. The telephone interview process was well received by all respondents, they were very eager to address issues very close to their hearts. Initially the researcher thought it would be a problem for elders to communicate in English; however they did their greetings in English, and communicate in the Nama/Damara language.

Collectively the respondents viewed entrepreneurship/business as an endeavour one undertakes to get value from it. For them it was a survival mechanism for human life. However they continue the definition in their own terms by indicating that although they do small survival projects, there are no markets to sell the product to.

This give the interpretation that the rural communities, both rural youth and communities are determined to achieve something in life and they are very passionate about trading; which takes us back to the German definition of *“unternehmung”*. The respondents viewed entrepreneurship/business as follows:

*“Business is a survival mechanism for me”. (Interview notes, L1, 12 May, 2008). “Business is a possibility for me to earn money” (interview notes, L2, 9 May, 2008). “Our culture is not based on entrepreneurship, nowadays young people have been exposed to it, but it is not necessarily part of our culture” (interview notes, Y1, 12 May, 2008). “This is coupled with our culture. Nowadays we Nama/Damara people don’t get good employment, and if we do get a job, it is generally a “low class” job, so I understand entrepreneurship as an opportunity for me to create a job for myself and other people as well (interview notes, Y2 – 11 May 2008 – Speaker used three languages namely; Afrikaans, English and Nama/Damara ).*

*P: For me entrepreneurship or business means to get something, from what you currently have in mind. Business also means having the markets to deliver the product. E.g.: When I want to cook Nama Soap, then I do not find enough markets to deliver the product to. If I do sell a few soaps, the little income I earn, goes back into transport, as I am always in need. In the end I am back to where I started (Interview notes May10, 2008 - (translated from Nama/Damara). “Entrepreneurship means to create a better living” (interview notes, C; 11 May, 2008).*

The concept of entrepreneurship clearly constitutes mixed feelings for the indigenous communities. As can be seen from the quotes above the respondents had various ideas as to what entrepreneurship could mean for their communities. Entrepreneurship was seen by some as not been based on culture, however the commonality of these respondents were the survival mechanism. Entrepreneurship in the rural youth Nama communities can thus be seen in the context of survival and the availability of suitable markets. It is clear that all these respondents foresee a better future if they engage in an entrepreneurial activity. The majority of these respondents coupled entrepreneur-



ship with culture, they firmly believed that culture has an influence on the way they viewed entrepreneurship. They struggles of the past as a motivation for them to want to strive for better, but spotting the relevant opportunities for survival and access to relevant markets, whether it is financial, social or informational remains a major hurdle. The one of the most important elements that was clearly not transparent in this definitions of business were a proper planning an delegation strategy, they did not talk about preparation or what their culture can do in preparing them to become great business owners/entrepreneurs. The collective, individual and cultural components are clear in all the responses.

### 6.1.2 The Meaning of culture

The outstanding features that respondents indicated with regard to culture were values, beliefs, community and the surrounding. Respondents also make reference with regard to their ancestors/forefathers. The vocabularies used by the respondents were very collective. They always refer to them as part of a community. These latter mentioned can clearly evident in the comments of respondents **L1, Y1, Y2 and P**:

*Respondent L1's viewpoint hit the nail on the coffin, as it exactly rounded the definition of most western scholars: "Culture refers to historical events which involve my forefathers; they make me feel who I am" (interview notes, L1, 09 May, 2008). "Much of our culture has western thoughts, not much is left. There is not as much strong influence as back in the days. Perhaps we want to be rich very fast". (interview notes, Y1 – 8 May 2008). "Culture is something one belief in, it is something you grow up with. I used culture in my life although it has its disadvantages as people discourage you at times and I feel underclass, but at times it makes you stronger and helps you to prove them wrong". (Interview not, Y2, 11 May, 2008 – Speaker combined three languages namely; Afrikaans, English and Nama/Damara). "Culture to me is a belief that our community possess. It portrays the intangible and tangible features of a community. The environment and the surroundings around the environment are very important when we refer to culture" (interview notes, P, 8 May, 2008 – translated from Nama/Damara).*

The dimension of individualism and collectivism which Hofstede (1980) refers to in his literature is clearly shown in these responses, however the respondents go ahead to define it in their own terms, by saying that I am only because of my ancestors. This definition is also not very far from the definition of Hofstede (1980) where he views culture as a programming of mindset (related to belief systems above). Culture is a lifestyle and we need it to grow and prosper (L2 and C – combined viewpoints from the rest of the participants). The determination of these respondents can clearly be seen in the responses. Furthermore, literature on culture indicates that culture is that complex whole which includes, knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, customs and other habits which man develops by been members of a particular society (Tylor, 1924). This indigenous rural youth communities clearly portrays this complexity, and their determination by carrying the customs and beliefs of they ancestors as can be seen from the history of Namibia till date.

### **6.1.3 Dreams for Collective Indigenous Rural Youth**

This paper made a number of references with regard to the collective societies (doing activities as part of a community) both in the literature of entrepreneurship, culture and issues pertaining to Namibian rural youth. Collectivism is the extent to which people need to be cared for, by family member's community and organisations. This paper revealed a number of concerns that most respondents had with regard to rural youth. The common concern across all respondents was "hopelessness".

*"We do not share the same dreams, and most of them are not serious. When they fail grade 10, they go out of school and roam around the streets" (interview notes, L1, 9 May 2008). L2: "I wish that my community will work hard to be more successful in life" (interview notes, Y1, 12 May 2008). "To encourage people to study, as there is no life without education or there is a life but it is so tough. With education its gets much easier (interview notes: Y2, 11 May 2008). "The young people around Namibia and when I talk about my community in particular are loosing hope and faith; they are disappearing like a plane in the sky, through the clear blue. I am aware that life is very tough nowadays, com-*

*pared to the days of our ancestors when life was much slower. However our youth are showing no respect or appreciation. When they do not complete their school career, they must at least be willing to help with the few sheep and goats we have. In the old days, there was much respect, regardless of your ethnic affiliation. When an elder person speaks you have to listen and this was happening across all cultural groups. There was no racism. (Interview notes P, 9 May 2008 – translated from Nama/Damara). “My wish for rural young people is education, self sustainability, drug and an alcohol free society. However the young people of today are diving into drugs, sex and alcohol (interview notes, C – 10 May 2008).*

A commonality across most respondents was they want their communities to be more successful in future, they seem to be clearly tired of been viewed in a negative lime-light. It was very important to know that P was very much concerned about a lack of respect amongst indigenous rural youth communities. Furthermore the dimension of “race” was raised that in the old days, regardless of your race and ethnic group, to respect someone was important. Thus the component of respect could have major obstacles from indigenous rural youth Nama communities.

Y1 was very passionate about the idea of rural people to have a working ethic and a culture of wanting to be successful. Y2 raised the importance of education and the benefits it could bring for the rural indigenous Nama community. This discussion of the collective clearly brought up some heat and tension as can be seen from most of the quotes. As a research it is sensible that this is a major area of concern in indigenous rural youth.

#### **6.1.4 Personal Dreams of Respondents**

An individual decision becomes very important when the rural youth Nama communities has to make choices that impact on their lives. Individualism portrays a situation in which each individual is supposed to care for themselves. Each individual is unique and born with some kind of gift, which he/she needs to share with people. We need to find the gift within ourselves (Albert White Hat). It is without hesitation that when we referred to “hidden potential” in this paper that is what the author is writing about. The responses were remarkable.

*“I L1 is 18, a school learner, and having very **“big dreams”**. I want to study in the technical field. My inspiration comes from the history of the first telephone lines and all those things. My parents and extended family help brought me up and are helping me to realise my dreams. My younger brother look up to me that is why I am working so hard. I am the technical guy in my parent’s home” (interview notes, L1- 9May, 2008). L2: “I want a better life, that’s my motivation and ensure a better life for the future generation” (interview notes, Y1: 12 May, 2008). “I want to continue my education as knowledge becomes outdated. My dream is to become independent and achieve the best life can provide me” (interview notes, Y2 – 11 May 2008). “My personal dream is long after I am dead, if young people can just listen to the elders and show love and respect” (interview notes: P, 9 May 2008). “My personal dream is that we need people who will lead the country” (interview notes: C, 9 May 2008).*

This paper revealed that the indigenous rural youth Nama communities have definite dreams and goals. The dimension of individualism and caring for themselves, and acting as role models at the same time was very prominent amongst most respondents. The P and C had however a very different notion, they were again covering up for their youth, they had more wishes for the younger generation rather than putting their needs first. In the discussion of collectivism they were not very happy with the youth situation; however in this dimension of individualism they are more concerned about the younger people. This behaviour is very common amongst indigenous people especially amongst the elderly. This is a clear illustration of the definition of social and indigenous entrepreneurship, the importance of caring for the society and the application of indigenous knowledge.

## 7. Conclusion

This study clearly reflects the underlying factors which are coupled with the **“hidden potential”** of the indigenous rural youth communities in Namibia. This is “hidden potential” of entrepreneurship will be discussed with guidance of the following key points from the history as indicated below:

- Prior to the arrival of the settlers the territory was buzzing with activity, and the rural communities were the founders of Windhoek. They also had their own links to Cape Town (these could be view from a trading point of view).
- Although some of the communities died during the German period, some still survived in hot and harsh conditions in the desert; including children (“youth could part of those children”). Germans were striving for an “ethnic cleansing”; however the rural communities still exist till date.
- Today Namibia is a Republic

From these notable points in history it could certainly be argued that long before colonisation rural communities were striving for self determination both through economic, social and political activities. The entrepreneurial characteristics of innovation, determination and willingness and ability to achieve their initial objectives could be seen the independence of the nation in 1990. Strong elements of collectivist are evident from history till date.

Fostering an entrepreneurial culture is mostly viewed in the light of growth in the economy, competitiveness and creation of jobs. This perception falls short when it is viewed in the relevance of entrepreneurship in indigenous/rural youth communities. The lifestyle within indigenous/ rural communities is of such a nature that most of changes which take place in their society with be influenced by their history. Furthermore any changes which takes place within a particular economy, will lead to change in the society. This will in fact affect the lifestyle and plans of the leaders of today and tomorrow (the youth) and in particular rural youth which will require an increasing degree of self reliance, faith and hope.

In respect to “**hidden potential**” which exist amongst the “rural youth” communities in Namibia, certainly their ancestors has the determination and the driving passion to gain independence, even some young people have sacrifice their lives that why “that rural communities” still exists today. History was not documented in that era, but today, a few in rural youth in Namibia gained access to education. This lead to the believe of the researcher that given a rich history and culture such as that of Namibia, there exist more “rural youth” within the communities which certainly just not have the means to realise their potential. The dissemination of timely and truthful information

is thus essential for future success. *“The future for Namibian rural youth is bright” (Interview notes, Y1; 12 May 2009).*

Youth development policies in an international and Namibian context are well designed, but in particular if we look at the Namibia youth development policy, there is no clear indication of what this policy aims to achieve for “rural youth” in the country. This is perhaps one of the key areas the policy needs to address, as rural young people constitute a major portion of the population.

The four key attributes which were discussed in the interviews indicated that the indigenous rural youth are very optimistic and passionate about change and success, not only for the individual but for the entire community. However, due to a lack of respect, values upon which culture is based might have been lost within the rural youth communities. Therefore this paper highlights two important areas for further examination, the importance of social and emotional intelligence in “rural youth” in Namibia. This is however not foreseen as a separate discussion but all the choices and survival conditions of these rural youth depend on the extent to which they are willing and able to cope with their emotions (Goleman, 2006). Being able to relate wholeheartedly and truthfully within the communities to result in better networks and the enhancement of social capital. This in turn will create a fostered culture of entrepreneurship.

In conclusion, this article only provides viewpoints from 30 (thirty) respondents, and has limitations as it occurs in most research. The viewpoints will certainly be different if a larger sample is used in future research or other regions of Namibia. It becomes crucial for the researcher to accept that there are vast differences in rural communities across countries, but also in a particular nation within different ethnic groups. This paper has however, contributed to the non-existent basis of studies pertaining to the rural youth in Namibia. This could enable future researchers, including the rural youth themselves, to add upon their patience and determination to live up to their maximum potential – to realise their **“hidden potential”**. Thus, it is the sincere hope of the researcher that further research been undertaken to improve the knowledge base of the role of culture and entrepreneurship in Namibian rural youth. Furthermore, it is the wish, that this paper could enhance and *“open up new debates / explorations”* for the current based of knowledge in the new dimension of entrepreneurship called ***“Indigenous Entrepreneurship”***.



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